

James J. Humes, *file* ← JFK Pathologist

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. — James J. Humes, the lead pathologist at President John F. Kennedy's autopsy and a target of conspiracy theorists, has died of lung cancer at age 74.

He died Thursday at his home in Ponte Vedra Beach, just outside Jacksonville.

He was chief pathologist at Bethesda Naval Hospital when Kennedy's body was flown there for an autopsy.

The pathology team concluded Kennedy was killed by two bullets fired from behind — a finding disputed to this day.

Humes stood by his work in his most famous case. Aside from testimony before government panels, he rarely spoke of the autopsy and gave only one interview published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1992.

He called the conspiracy theories "general idiocy" and "a tragedy."

"It almost defies belief, but I guess it is the price we pay for living in a free country," Humes said in the interview.

"I can only question the motives of those who propound these ridiculous theories for a price and who have turned the president's death into a profit-making industry."

Humes gave the interview to rebut conspiracy talk that resulted from release of the Oliver Stone film "JFK," said former JAMA editor George Lundberg, a longtime friend of Humes.

"He was a consummate professional who succeeded brilliantly in all he ever did, and yet had this one day hung around his neck forever in the eyes of many," Lundberg said.

Humes retired from the Navy as a captain.

He was a clinical pathology professor at University Medical Center's Health Service Center in Jacksonville and formerly was medical director of St. John Medical Center in Detroit.

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